No. 64

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

Gradually the thought of escape dawned on Lillian. Unceasingly she was on the alert for a favorable opportunity to carry out the plan she had formed.

R. of M. G., No. 64.

Copyright 1926 by
THE NIELEN PUBLISHING CO.
Cincinnati, Ohio.

THE OLD lawyer nodded his head repeatedly as he listened to Marie's plea for Miss Crawford. He nodded as he always did when he had formed a definite conclusion. "Well," he said gravely, "I am really glad the girl is here. I think Mrs. Crawford won't try to bluff me. I am going to take a hand in the matter now. If that woman should happen to call when I am not at home, don't let her in. Send her to my office."

"You are the dearest man I know," Marie said gratefully as she put both of her hands on his shoulders. "No wonder my father thought so much of you."

"Tut—tut, young woman," Mr. Shields laughed. "I don't want any such compliments. Keep them for a certain individual at Oak Manor. Unless I am much mistaken you will have a chance to pass them to Phil Gordon before long."

Marie stared at the speaker, joy and doubt mingled in her wide eyes.

"What—what do you mean?" she gasped.

But he would not explain. With a gentle pat on her cheek he left her and went to bed.

That night Marie went to bed her heart beating with high hopes. Mr. Shields was not the man in indulge in foolish words, or promises that could not be kept.

Perhaps something important had happened at Oak Manor which made a reunion with her loved ones possible.

The next morning she awoke later than usual. To her dismay she found upon coming downstairs that the old lawyer had already left for his office.

Somewhat vexed she returned to the floor above and opened the door which led to the room occupied by Lillian Crawford. The young girl was lying on the bed

with her eyes wide open.

She uttered a little cry when she saw her loyal friend enter.

"Oh, this is all so wonderful," she cried as she embraced Marie. "I can't hardly believe that I am free to do as I please. I am no longer a prisoner."

Marie smiled, then suddenly grew serious.

"So your stepmother kept you a prisoner, did she?" Her voice was low and it quivered slightly. "I wonder if she knows that you can prosecute her for that. To deprive a person forcibly of liberty is punishable by law. Mr. Shields told me——"

"Does—does Mr. Shields know that I am here?" Lillian interrupted.

"He does, and he said you can stay until we find Victor Talbot," came back. "If your stepmother makes more trouble for you, he will bring suit to have her removed from her guardianship. And in that case, she can no longer prevent you from marrying the man you love."

While Lillian dressed she kept up an animated conversation with her friend.

But not until they had finished their breakfast did she tell about her unpleasant experiences in Cincinnati.

"That was a mean trick to play on you," said Miss Desmond. "But, I think it will be the last. If Mrs. Crawford tries conclusions with Mr. Shields, you may rest assured that she will come out second best. And now," she added with a smile, "we will take a nice drive along the lake. I think we'll both enjoy that."

In a few minutes both women were dressed for the drive. Mr. Shields was the owner of an expensive limousine which he had placed at Marie's disposal.

"I want you to use it whenever you feel like it,"

he had told her.

But this was the first time she took advantage of the offer. It afforded her a degree of pleasure to sit back with Lillian Crawford and tell the chauffeur where they wanted to go.

When they returned from their drive, the maid announced that a gentleman had called, asking for Miss Desmond.

Marie's heart suddenly began to beat fast. Had Phil discovered her place of abode? Was it he who called?

They had not long to wait before the gentleman called again. The maid brought up his card. It read, "Victor Talbot."

There was a cry of delight. Lillian rushed to the door and in a moment was drawn into her lover's arms, who looked down at her in joyful surprise.

"Lillian! Lillian!" he cried, his voice quivering. "You here? I have been wandering all over looking for you, and here you are in Chicago!"

Marie softly closed the door. Her presence was not necessary.

Within, the young girl nestled to her lover and against his heart she lay, shaking with little shivers of delight, looking into the noble face bent so lovingly over her, her mind floating between unconscious exultation and languorous joy.

For a while, without a word, he held her thus in his strong arms, gazing with rapture and anguish on the beautiful image of this life's love, till his eyes were dimmed with rising tears.

Then he slowly stooped over the upturned face, and as she dropped her lids with a faint smile, kissed her lips again and again.

Then she told him what she had gone through

during the last weary months.

As she stroked his still haggard cheeks, her eyes read on his face the sufferings which he, too, had undergone.

When she had told him all, she threw her arms around his neck and said with deep emotion:

"Nothing shall separate us again — nothing but death!"

Talbot nodded gravely. He did not reply. His eyes were moist and a shadow as of great grief passed over his features.

It was quite late in the evening, when they stood together, alone, at the window, that Victor asked:

"Lillian, do you know under what circumstances I have been acquitted? Do you know that disgrace hovers over me like a dark cloud and will not be blown away?

"Even though we will succeed in releasing you from your step-mother's tyranny, I must not bind your fate to mine, for I am outlawed and outcast!

"Whereever I go they will point at me and say, 'there is a murderer!' Wherever I am, they will shrink back from me — a murderer!

"Would you share the fate of such a man? No, my love, the burden would be too much for you. Life is long, Lillian; you would fall under this terrible load and regret the hour in which you became mine!"

"No, Victor dear, no. Where you go, I will go," she cried, "what you must bear I will bear with you! I fear nothing, for my love is so great that it will endure anything."

Deeply moved, he drew her to his breast.

"God has suspended a great trouble over me, which often threatens to crush me. I am not the man I was; my spirit is wounded. It is not a bright future which awaits you at my side; you will find more shadow

than light. Think well, Lillian, I will not blame you or be angry if you——"

"Victor, say no more," sobbed Lillian. "I will not desert you in your need! Oh, how little you know me. I have no home but with you. No, I will not leave you! I am yours and will remain yours forever, though the whole world condemns you!"

With an exclamation of joy, he drew her to him, and kissed the tears from her cheeks. For a while he said nothing, so great was his emotion.

Lillian, by her beauty, had won Talbot's admiration when first he beheld her.

When he met her again, afterwards, her charms of mind and her thousand winsome ways moved him deeply.

But now, when he beheld for the first time her grand, noble soul, and he saw her pure heart filled to overflowing with its burden of love for him, he was awestruck and wondered if he could ever merit such devotion.

"God forbid that you may ever regret this hour!" he exclaimed. "I will do everything to make your life happy. But we have to reckon with an ugly opponent—the world. May God change its opinion!"

Chapter 210

MARIE'S RETURN

IT WAS the following day. Victor Talbot had taken command of the situation so far as Lillian Crawford was concerned. And in his determination to fight his sweetheart's stepmother, he had the encouragement and legal backing of Mr. Shields, one of the most shrewd attorneys in Cook County.

In Marie Desmond the lovers had an ardent well-wisher. She glorified in their happiness, and it reminded her of the day when Philip Gordon wooed and won her.

Like the honorable man he was, Talbot insistently discouraged Lillian from marrying him.

Not until the murderer of Roger Hawkins was found and his own innocence established beyond all doubt, Victor determined to refrain from becoming matrimonially entangled.

The fact that he had been acquitted at the trial for the want of conclusive evidence was not enough.

Already he had ample proof that a good many of his friends and acquaintances still regarded him with suspicion.

Being painfully conscious of the cloud which still rested upon his name, he felt he could not ask a sweet innocent girl like Lillian Crawford to share the burden.

His hands must be absolutely clean before he led her to the altar.

Most of his time now was given to digging up evidence which would warrant a reviewing of the case. The man who shot Roger Hawkins must be found.

To the surprise of all, Mrs. Crawford did not put in an appearance at the home of Mr. Shields. This seemed to indicate that she had no knowledge of her step-daughter's hiding place.

Lillian felt greatly relieved, and finally gathered sufficient courage to go out with Victor Talbot.

One morning as the young lovers had gone down to the shopping district Marie stood at the window watching the chilly autumn blasts rob the trees of their foliage.

The sky was overcast with dark clouds, and a downpour seemed imminent. With a little more interest than usual she noticed the mail man approach the house.

She did something she had never done before. She ran out to meet him.

He handed her several letters addressed to Mr. Shields, and she was about to turn away.

"Here is something for you," the mail man declared with a smile.

One glance at the envelope told Marie who its sender was, for Annie's handwriting had become familiar.

There were the usual markations which indicated that the letter had been sent to the Florida address, and then forwarded in care of Mr. Shields.

A heavy feeling clutched at her heart as she re-entered the house, her eyes still fixed on the envelope. Not until she was alone in her room, did she break the seal.

She had scarcely read the first few lines, when a low wail escaped her lips. But she read on to the bitter finish.

"Because of the cruel treatment accorded him by the tutor, urged on by Alice, Harry is again in a critical condition," Annie ended the letter. "He and Phyllis both

keep on asking for you. You promised me you'd come back if ever the children needed you. They need you now. Please come at once."

Then, when Marie's tear-dimmed eyes cleared a moment later, she noticed a postscript at the bottom of the letter which said:

"You need not worry about the woman who usurped your place here for so long. She left Oak Manor suddenly and it is rumored that she went to New York with a rich Chicago banker by the name of Fredericks."

Her heart torn with grief, the former Mrs. Gordon folded the letter and put it in her purse.

Of all the emotions which tormented her, the intense desire of being with her children was uppermost.

She wept no longer, for cold determination had seized her.

She packed her clothing in two grips, then telephoned for a taxi. While waiting for the conveyance she sat down and wrote a note to Lillian Crawford and asked the maid to give it to the latter as soon as she returned.

Then she called up Mr. Shields and asked him if he could see her at his office for a few minutes. He told her he'd be glad to.

Giving the taxi driver his instructions, Marie leaned back in the seat and breathed a deep sigh.

What the immediate future would bring to her, she dared not guess. The children needed her and nothing else mattered particularly just now.

Mr. Shields received her with a smile of welcome. But as soon as he saw the unusual pallor on her face, he became alarmed.

"Good Lord, what's happened?" he inquired, leading her into his private office and closing the door. "You look like a ghost, Marie."

For an answer she gave him Annie's letter.

The old attorney adjusted his glasses and began to read. Occasionally a sort of a grunt came from between his tightly closed lips.

"So you re going back to Oak Manor, are you?" he said, folding the letter and handing it to Marie.

"Yes, I must go," she replied, her voice trembling. "I—I don't know what Phil will say when he sees me. It may seem strange for me to return without having been asked to do so. But my children need me and I am going."

Mr. Shields wagged his head and a peculiar smile twisted his mouth.

"You remember what I told you a few days ago, my dear?" he grinned. "I predicted that you would be back at Oak Manor before long. Well, my prediction is coming true. And you needn't worry about what Phil will say. He'll be glad to see you, for he needs you as much as the children."

When Marie failed to make a response, he continued:

"I suppose you are ready now to throw off the mask and tell him that you are his first wife. I think you ought to. In my estimation the time is ripe for it. There will be a happy——"

Marie put out a hand suddenly to stop him.

"No!" she cried with some vehemence. "I have no such intentions. We must not forget that Phil is still tied to another woman. Do you think for a moment that I would add to his misery by revealing myself now? Why, it would place him in a horrible position."

"But—but he loves you and he wants you," Mr. Shields argued. "You have every right to——"

"I have no such right," she again interrupted. "Alice is still Mrs. Gordon, and I am not. I am not small

enough to use the fact that he is temporarily separated from his wife to re-establish myself as the mistress of Oak Manor! No, my dear friend, nothing could be further from my mind."

The old lawyer looked his surprise.

"The stand you are taking in the matter is worthy of you, dear child," he acceded. "Oh, I know you have your father's pride. But there is one little thing we must not overlook. What if Phil has found out in the meantime that you are his first wife?"

"Then it is up to me to deny it," was the prompt rejoinder.

"Do you think you can get by with it, Marie?"

"I don't only think it, I know it."

After Marie had taken her departure, Mr. Shields sat for a long while with his chin resting in his hand.

He hoped fervently that Marie would fail in her avowed attempt to deny her identity to Phil Gordon.

"That other woman never had a right to call herself his wife," he said to himself, as his fist came down on the table with sudden anger. "And unless I am much mistaken, she has gone for good. If she ran off with that old libertine, Fredericks, she has about hung herself. Philip Gordon will have cause for a divorce."

The first ravages of an unusually cold autumn were transforming the work Nature had built up during the summer.

The stately oak trees which stood in gigantic clusters about the magnificent Gordon home, were being robbed of their foliage in a most relentless manner.

No longer the beautiful flowers bloomed in profusion. The grass had turned yellow, and, save for the deep changeless green of the spiral pines in the park, only the hectic coloring of the dying year met the eye.

It seemed that the melancholy days had come indeed. The day had waned to a chilly close.

At one of the windows overlooking the spacious grounds, stood Annie. There was an anxious look on her face, and one hand was pressed against her heart. She had just succeeded in quieting both of the Gordon children.

Harry lay in his bed, his big eyes staring wonderingly at the girl, whose shoulders were shaking.

Little Phyllis sat in a corner playing with her little dolls. She loved them and petted them as only a child with a well-developed mother instinct could.

A deep sigh coming from the boy, caused Annie to turn sharply. She went over to the bed.

"What is the matter, Harry?" she inquired gently.

"Oh, Annie," sighed the boy, "now the winter will come with its long nights. Do you remember, last year, how beautiful it was? Miss Desmond used to read to us and tell us, oh, such stories! Who will do it this winter, Annie?"

"Maybe I will," answered the girl.

Harry smiled sadly.

He did not wish to hurt her feelings, for she was always good and kind. But she could not tell stories like Miss Desmond.

As though she guessed his thoughts, she said with apparent assurance:

"I believe Miss Desmond will soon be here, and you will have lots of fun again."

"No, Annie I can't believe you," answered the boy. "If she wanted to come back, she would have done it long

ago. I know why she didn't come back—because mamma hated her! But I would much rather have Miss Desmond than mamma who was so bad to me. Oh, I am so glad she has gone away!"

Annie looked at the child with tears in her eyes. Could he have but known that the one for whom he yearned, was his own mother!

"I wish Miss Desmond would come to us for Christmas, at least," began Harry after a pause. "I wonder if she would do it? I will ask daddy to write her a letter and invite her."

"Do it, I am sure she would come," said Annie with a meaning smile.

"Miss Desmond sewed the arms on my doll," said Phyllis, "but I don't think you can do it, Annie."

"Well, I will try," answered the girl.

What was that! There was an outcry from Harry. Greatly startled, Annie turned to him. Was she dreaming? There, at the door, stood Marie Desmond.

Before she could say a word, Marie rushed to the children and embraced them passionately.

"My poor darlings," she murmured, laughing and crying, almost hysterical. "At last I am with you again. Oh, how I have longed for you!"

Phyllis clung to Marie while Harry, greatly affected, lay back deathly pals, great drops rolling down his cheeks. He could not say a word.

"You poor, poor child, what have they done to you?" cried Marie, covering his thin little face with kisses. "I have prayed for you day after day, and not an hour has passed that I did not think of you."

"Will you stay with us again?" asked the boy.

"Yes, my boy, if it is God's will, I will leave you no more," nodded Marie, breathing heavily. "I can not bear to know that you are so sad and unhappy. Annie

has written me everything about you."

With these words she stretched out her hands to the girl, her eyes beaming her gratitude.

Annie did not go further, for a warning look from Marie stopped her. Fortunately, the children, in their joy, noticed nothing.

"Oh, Miss Desmond, will you sew the arms on my dollie again?" begged Phyllis.

Harry threw his arms about Marie's neck and his voice shook with feeling as he said:

"We are so glad you have come back. Every night I prayed God to send you back again. We missed you awfully,——daddy too. But now we will not let you go again——"

A slight noise caused them to look around.

There stood Philip Gordon at the door, with his arms folded across his breast. He was gazing blankly at the scene before him.

Chapter 211.

BITTER ENMITY.

HEN Mrs. Crawford discovered that Lillian had given her the slip, she was wild with rage. She set out at once to find the girl, but she was baffled at every turn. Finally she gave up the chase and returned home.

Her arrival was entirely unexpected, and naturally she found everything in the greatest disorder.

In her present state of mind, she proceeded to vent upon the servants a great part of the bitterness she felt.

Several of them she discharged on the spot, with the consequence that they brought proceedings against her for wages due them for the balance of their time, thus causing her more annoyance and vexation.

She went through the house like an evil spirit. Her servants feared her quick glances and kept out of her way. She flew into a rage at the merest trifles.

Alone in her room, she brooded constantly over plans of vengence. She found some satisfaction in the fact that she still controlled Lillian's property and income, and that the girl was still under her authority.

By virtue of her right of guardianship, she could compel her to return as soon as she had discovered her whereabouts.

She gloated over the torments she would prepare for them both—Lillian and Talbot. The two were not to bask in the sunlight of their own love long! The storm would soon break.

Secretly she hired a detective to trace Lillian.

Mrs. Crawford had already satisfied herself that she had not gone to the Wentworth's, as she had at first supposed.

While she was awaiting the report from the detective, a visit from Victor Talbot was suddenly announced. She was startled; she had imagined that he was still away searching for Lillian. What did he wish—why had he come?! Her heart began to beat violently.

As she stepped into the reception room where Victor Talbot awaited her, her proud, cold face did not betray to him her disquietude and constraint.

Victor greeted her with cold, formal politeness. Now he knew to the full, the character of the wretched woman who had not shrunk from proposing a crime to enable her to attain her desire.

"You can well imagine, Mrs. Crawford, what has brought me to your house to-day," he began. "I am here on behalf of Lillian."

An exclamation of surprise interrupted him.

"Oh, then you know where she is?"

"Certainly, she is under the best of care," he told her. "Lillian is under the protection of Miss Desmond. Lillian took refuge with her, when at last she escaped from your prison."

Mrs. Crawford smiled sarcastically.

"So Lilian has been telling you stories. She was so utterly out of her mind after what happened, that I was compelled to take her away, and now the ungrateful girl will have it that I deprived her of her liberty."

"Do not keep up this farce, please, Mrs. Crawford said Victor with menace in his voice. "You forget an important witness—Miss Desmond. At the time, you gave her rather particular instructions as to the treatment of your victim."

Purple with rage, Mrs. Crawford bit her lips.

She had not thought of that. But quickly she collected herself. She threw back her head and asked him with a sudden spirit of defiant insolence, while her level brows knitted into a dark frown:

"Well, then, why have you called here? My time is limited; kindly be brief!"

Talbot smiled and continued deliberately:

"Certainly I will be brief. As matters stand now, it is best that my engagement to Lillian be announced at once. We plan to be married shortly."

Mrs. Crawford shot him a swift glance. Finally she remarked in a slow drawl:

"How clever of you, Mr. Talbot. In your present precarious position, it would be quite a bit of good fortune if you married a Crawford, the mistress of a large fortune. But a short time ago, I would have been unwilling to believe that you have so little conscience as to even think of making Lillian share your disgrace."

"Mrs. Crawford—no insults!" cried Victor, pale with indignation and outraged pride. "You are a woman. If you were a man, by heaven, you would answer to me for that!

"But why be angry? After what has taken place between us, you are incapable of offending me. To the point then! I will marry Lillian, and that in the shortest time possible! I have only come here to tell you so!"

Mrs. Crawford folded her arms across her breast

"Ah—you believe I must say 'yes' to that? Really, you are amusing!" she sneered. "What can you be thinking about? Do you imagine for a moment that I will agree to your demand? If so, you are greatly mistaken."

"As Lillian's guardian, I decline to give my consent to her marriage. You will never have it—do you hear —never!

"When she comes to reason, Lillian will thank me

on her knees for having saved her from the misery, shame and disgrace which would be the natural result of a union with you!"

Talbot started up as if stung.

His hands doubled up in helpless anger. He felt an impulse to crush this woman with a blow of his fist.

Controling his wrath, he answered:

"It will be my care to provide for Lillian's happiness. At any rate, she will be happier with me than with you. It is Lillian's own will to be my wife. You know very well that I am not a fortune hunter; you know that I am independent and well able to support her in the style to which she has been accustomed.

"She will want for nothing with me. In your own interest, Mrs. Crawford, I advise you to make peace. Do not force us to go to extremes. I am resolved to free Lillian from your power.

"I am sure you would not wish the matter to become public. There is nothing to prevent Lillian from bringing suit against you for deprivation of liberty. Your guardianship has not given you the power to treat like a prisoner.

"It will be wiser for you to drop your opposition and give a written declaration that you have no objection to our union. We will not mention Lillian's estate; it will revert to her in due course of time when she reaches maturity."

Mrs. Crawford controlled herself admirably, her face as immutable as that of a sphinx.

"Well, if I refuse to consent, what then?" she scoffed.

"Then we will find ways and means to do without your consent," he replied. "But do not be surprise if we show you but small mercy."

"Very well,—do what you will!" the woman shot

back. "I withhold my consent for the simple reason that I will not be a willing party to Lillian's unhappiness and misery. On the contrary, I will apply to the courts for an injunction to prevent the marriage.

"I'll demand the return of Lillian to my guardianship! Her father put her in my charge, and it is my duty to care for her!"

"Would to God that his eyes had been opened, before he made this provision, to the true character of the woman to whom he confided the welfare of his only child," remarked Victor dryly and with bitterness. "Never in the world can you atone to the poor girl for your misdeeds against her!"

"Don't worry about that, Mr. Talbot," jeered Mrs. Crawford. "I am well able to answer for all I have done, and I will—"

"Keep to the subject, Mrs. Crawford," interrupted Talbot. "You want war;—very well, you shall have it, but I can tell you in advance you will be defeated!"

"For the sake of the name which you and Lillian bear, I would have desired to keep this affair quiet, but since you will not have it otherwise, you will take the consequences!"

Before she could reply, he had bowed stiffly and left the room.

Her eyes followed him with unspeakable hatred. Finally a shrill laugh came from her lips.

"You will soon find out what I can do," she hissed. "No! though I may have to move heaven and earth to do it, you shall never marry each other—never, never!"

Victor Talbot gloomily made his way home. He was thoroughly disappointed, for he was not prepared for Mrs. Crawford's obstinacy.

On the contrary, he felt confident that a threat of public scandal would bring her to terms.

He realized that his foe was resourceful and tenacious, and that it would be a fight to the death to free Lillian from her power.

Walking ahead in these thoughts, he was aroused at last by quickly approaching footsteps behind him.

Turning to see who was following him, he saw Dr. Van Buren. They had not seen each other since Talbot's arrest.

Dr. Van Buren greeted him cordially and heartily congratulated him. His manner said plainer than words:

"You are, and have always been, a man of honor in my eyes—I believe in your innocence."

Victor felt this silent assurance and pressed the doctor's hand gratefully.

In answer to the later's inquiry, where he was coming from, Talbot, who felt an impulse to confide in someone, told him, and then related all that Mrs. Crawford had inflicted upon Lillian.

Dr. Van Buren was horrified.

"I will admit that in spite of her beauty and exterior charm, I have always had an aversion for this woman," he declared, with deep conviction. "People who, without any particular reason, are so amiable as Mrs. Crawford and always speak in honeyed words, are to be feared.

"I have always felt sorry for the poor girl, who, even while her father lived, had a hard time. During his last illness, I came daily to the house; I could not help seeing and hearing a great many things.

"Frequently enough, she was treated very harshly by Mrs. Crawford, and more than once I wondered that the child bore all her outrages with such patience.

"Mr. Crawford, too, suffered under the yoke that he had taken on himself with this woman. Of course,

the world did not know it, but at home, within four walls ——well, I need not say more.

"This guardianship over Lillian, is originally a scheme of Mrs. Crawford's. I know positively, that in this respect, Mr. Crawford had entirely different plans, but she knew how the will read, and twisted him around her little finger.

"From what I know of her character, I think it is out of the question to hope that she can be persuaded or threatened into consenting to your marriage with her step-daughter.

"In your place, Talbot, do you know what I would do? I would take my bride to a state where she is of legal age and marry her. Her step-mother could carry on to her heart's content after that. You two would be man and wife—what more do you want?"

Even before he had finished, Talbot had caught his idea.

"That it a happy thought, doctor," he cried. "You can imagine the state of my mind that I should not have thought of this expedient. It is the very best thing we can do. Let Lillian be my wife, and there is nothing for Mrs. Crawford to do but to keep quiet."

The doctor paused,—he had to go in another direction. With a hearty shake of the hand, he said to Talbot encouragingly:

"'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady.' The attempt can not cost you your life. Go ahead, 'fortune favors the brave' you know."

They parted.

Thoughtfully, Dr. Van Buren went on his rounds.

"This Talbot," he said to himself, "in spite of all he has gone through is an enviable fellow, for does he not possess the affection of a good, true and beautiful girl, whose love has been tried in the fire of misfortune?

"What is life without love?" he sighed moodily. "For whom do I work and labor from morning till night? And what more does life mean to me than a little food, drink and sleep, and that is all. How different it would be if I had a wife!"

Again he sighed.

The image of Marie Desmond rose in his mind, but it did not awaken in him the old feeling of grief and disappointment.

How strange it seemed to him; he could not understand himself. If, indeed, he was under the influence of passionate love, as he fancied, how came it that this defeat of his hopes did not so oppress him?

He had overcome his love for her much sooner than he had ever expected.

Marie Desmond now seemed to him so unattainable, so beyond his reach, that he felt a sort of consolation in the thought that she could not have been his under any circumstances, or in spite of anything that he could have done. He wondered if he would ever see her again.

Chapter 212.

A STRANGE PATIENT.

S Dr. Van Buren walked ahead, his attention was attracted by a shawl lying at the side of the road. Going forward to pick it up, he became aware that a woman, probably its owner, lay in a swoon in the grass at the roadside.

Quickly he went to her. She seemed to have collapsed and fallen unconscious. There was not a soul to be seen far and wide.

An ejaculation of astonishment escaped Dr. Van Buren as, bending over her, he saw a strikingly delicate and refined face.

He knew almost every person in the community, but this young woman was a stranger to him.

Dr. Van Buren thought he had never seen such a lovely face.

Long silky lashes shadowed her eyes, her skin was clear and smooth, but her mouth was drawn in an expression of great pain, which went deep to his heart.

On her left hand, his quick eye espied a marriage ring; she was therefore, a wife! At last he brought her to consciousness, and she opened her eyes.

They were large, dark and spiritual, but their expression was one of great sadness. The doctor gazed into the dark orbs as if bewitched. He could not turn his glance from them.

A dark crimson wave now flushed her face. Startled, she leaned over to reach a little basket which lay on the ground near her and attempted to rise.

Her effort was vain, she could not get to her feet.

With a little cry,she sank back.

"What is the trouble?" asked Dr. Van Buren kindly, as he saw a deathly paleness steal on her anew and her eyes closed again.

Her lips moved, but no sound came forth.

Qickly he searched through his pockets from which he brough out a vial—placing it to her lips. The effect was almost immediate. Signs of returning consciousness showed at once in her face. The eyes opened once more, and a little color came into the cheeks.

"You seem entirely worn out," said the doctor, shaking his head. "You must have been ill."

Again the beautiful eyes gazed into his, shyly and afraid. A weary, oppressed expression lay in her glance.

"Yes, I have been very ill," she returned weakly —"it was typhoid," she added in explanation.

"Then you have been allowed to get up much too soon, and you have not taken care of yourself," he reproached gently. "It was very thoughtless. You are in danger of a relapse. Why did you not take better care of yourself?"

The dark eyes suddenly filled with tears and the lips quivered as if in pain.

"I just wanted to get something in the village," said the woman, and suddenly a weakness came over me and I must have fainted here."

"Do you live far from here," the physician inquired.

"No, only about a ten minutes' walk. We live at the 'Ivy Cotage.'"

Dr. Van Buren nodded.

He knew the little cotage well; he had heard that it had been recently rented out by its owner, presumably to an architect.

"Were you sick long?" he asked. "You must not take my questions in bad part — I am a doctor and consider it my duty to call your attention to the danger you incurred by going out."

Again the sad eyes looked in his.

"Yes, I was sick for a long time," she sighed, drooping her head. "I was in bed for six weeks. I was barely able to get out when we moved here from the city. I naturally helped with the work, but I must have done too much, for now I feel very weak and faint. I can hardly stand."

"But why did you go out to-day if you did not feel well? Why did you not have someone go for you?" he asked sternly.

She shrank away, and a bitter expression played about the corners of her mouth.

"I had no one to send," she answered almost inaudibly. "I was all alone and had to go myself."

Dr. Van Buren was about to inquire further, "why did not your husband go if you felt so badly,"—but he suppressed the question as he saw that she was again endeavoring to rise.

"Lean on my arm," he said, "and we will see if we can get along."

She took it timidly, and again her pale face reddened. They went forward slowly, step by step.

He could see what the effort meant to her, for drops of perspiration soon came out upon her forhead, but no word of complaint came from her.

He pitied her intensely.

There was something so terribly sad and forelorn in her manner, as though she was crushed by a secret sorrow. Aside from her illness, what could be her trouble?

The doctor rarely took his glance from her. His

eyes seemed riveted to her delicate face as he led her carefully, as he would a child.

They exchanged but few words. At intervals he paused so that she could rest and catch her breath. Gratitude shone in her eyes—she was touched by his kindness.

She seemed to show an embarrassment, as though she were not accustomed to receiving attention and consideration.

At last they reached the little Ivy Cottage.

It received its name from the screen of ivy vines which covered its front. In reality it was quite a simple, plain little house with a tiny lawn about it.

The building contained three or four rooms and a hall. The young woman drew a key from the pocket of her coat and opened the door of the cottage. They stepped into a small vestibule that had tiled flooring.

She then opened another door which led into a small, but cozy living room, which appeared to serve them as parlor and dining room both.

There was an air of neatness and spotless cleanliness about the little dwelling.

The furnishings were a remarkable mixture, and consisted largely of cheap pieces, but here was a cabinet, there a chair or a table that showed signs of better times.

In spite of all, the room was cheerful and attractive, for it was unmistakably a woman's hand which ruled here.

Everything was tasteful and neat. The snowy curtains were of plain dimity, with rose-colored borders.

There were flowers in the windows and a canary twittered in a cage in the sunlight.

With tottering steps the young woman went to a couch and sank down upon it, exhausted. Closing her eyes, she lay her head back on the cushions.

Dr. Van Buren could not remove his eyes from her charming face. He went to her and felt her pulse.

The case did not seem to puzzle him; and from the bag which he always carried with him, he took out suitable remedies.

His practice took him over such a large area in the country, that it was necessary for him to carry medicines and instruments with him in case of emergencies.

Often there was not time to send for them, as it is a trait of humanity to send for a doctor only at the last moment.

"Take one of these powders this evening, and the other early in the morning," he prescribed, "but most of all, you must lie down and rest. Have you any one who could look after you?"

"No, there is no one," she told him.

"Is—your husband away?" he inquired.

Again she shrank back, and her look became bitter.

"He is seldom home," she answered at last, with much hesitation. "He is a great deal away from home."

"Then someone else must come here, for you can not be left alone," decided Dr. Van Buren. "You can not get on like this; you must have someone to nurse you!"

Deeper and deeper sank her head so that he could not see her face, but he did notice the motion of her hands as she clasped them together.

Suddenly he heard that the street door was being opened.

Heavy steps sounded in the vestibule, and in a moment the door of the living room was opened by a young man whose dissipated face showed plainly that he was a drinker.

The young woman started uneasily.

At the sight of the stranger, the man stared in

surprise and examined him mistrustfully.

He stepped towards the doctor and asked:

"Who are you—what do you want here?!"

Dr. Van Buren gave his name and explained why he had come.

Knight—the young woman's husband— looked darkly at his wife who shrank back into a corner of the sofa, and said in disparaging tones:

"Well, there is nothing much the matter with her. She is as weak as a fly, that's all. This moving has upset her. It's a terrible burden to have a sick wife!"

The redness of anger mounted in the doctor's face.

"How can you take it so coolly?" he said sharply. "It is your duty to see that your wife receives proper care. She must lie down and absolutely must not get up again until she has entirely recovered!"

"Really, that's great!" jeered Knight, "but how are we to go about it? Do you think I can pick up the money in the streets? I've been in hard luck and have lost everything; we must get along as best we can."

"Are you out of employment?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, just now I am. Times are bad——"

"Well, then, you can stay here and care for her. You can do what little there is to be done about the house and——"

Knight sprang up angrily.

"Say—I have not come to that yet! A fine idea —maid of all work! No, my dear fellow, you are reckoning without your host. I can't sit around here; I must look for work outside."

The young wife had buried her face in her hands.

Was it shame for the raw brutality of her husband which caused her tears to flow?

"Well, what is to be done?" said Dr. Van Buren thoughtfully. "That someone must stay here is beyond

question. Perhaps I can send one of the charity nurses from town. If possible, I will send her here.

"Go to bed as quickly as possible, Mrs. Knight," he said, turning to her. "Take the powders as I have ordered, and keep quiet. You must avoid excitement. I will come to see you again in the morning."

He offered her his hand, and as she now took hers from her face, he saw that she had been crying.

Her big, dark eyes looked up at him in gratitude, and a soft "God bless you!" came from her lips.

The doctor nodded to Knight, and was about to leave the room, when the latter stepped toward him.

"I want to tell you doctor," he growled, "I will not have any snivelling hypocritical charity nurse about the house. It means just another mouth to feed and I can't manage now. Just let her stay where she is, I will look after my wife myself!"

Dr. Van Buren looked the man steadily in the eye.

"You are not a man in whose care your wife may be left. I will send a nurse, that is all!" he declared. "It is a shame that you have not enough feeling to realize that your wife must have special care. Your objections will not hinder me from doing what is my duty."

With this he left the cottage.

Knight was not a little dumfounded.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed, "but he has nerve! But he had better stay away.

"I tell you," he said turning to his wife, "neither he nor the nurse shall come into this house. What are you thinking about anyway, to bring strangers here? Isn't it hard enough for me to listen to your wailing and whining, must others hear your story, too?

"You must have told a pretty tale, or where could he have got the impudence to speak the way he did. I should have taken the fellow by the collar and thrown

him out of the door, and he wouldn't have been so anxious to come again."

Tears flowed in a steady stream from the eyes of his poor wife.

She understood the feeling of false pride which prompted her husband's brutal language, and she knew how her weeping irritated him, but she could not restrain herself.

"There you go again with your crying and moaning!" he cried as he saw her tear-stained face. "You make it impossible for me to stay home! I'm sick of it all! It would serve you right if I never came home again!"

Thoroughly infuriated he left the house, slamming the door behind him. "Oh, God, please let me die!" sobbed the miserable young wife.

Chapter 213

MARGARET WENTWORTH

AFTER Marie Desmond's sudden departure for Oak Manor, Lillian Crawford decided to change her place of abode Although Mr. Shields insisted that she remain at his home until her marriage to Victor Talbot, the young girl longed for the companionship of her own sex. Quite naturally her thoughts turned to Margaret Wentworth, an old friend of the family.

A long distance telephone conversation with the latter resulted in an urgent invitation, and so Lillian, after a consultation with her lover, went to the Wentworth home in Louisville.

Her reception left nothing to be desired. Margaret Wentworth was a woman with a romantic turn of mind.

Nothing could have suited her better than having a part in the promulgation of the love affair between her young friend and Victor Talbot.

But Lillian was not very optimistic as to the future. Everything depended upon the interview her lover had gone to seek with her step-mother. Even Miss Wentworth's cheerful companionship could not dispel her gloom.

It was the second day after Lillian Crawford's arrival in Louisville. The two girls were seated in the cozy Wentworth dining room, chatting over their breakfast.

Lillian's appetite seemed to have forsaken her.

Continued in next number

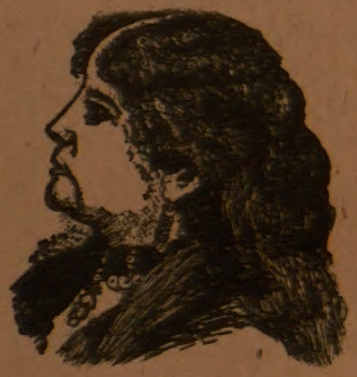
Tell Your Own Fortune!

M'lle LeNormand's
Only Genuine and Complete

Fortune Telling Cards

Instructive and Amusing

THE celebrated Fortune Teller M'lle LeNormand has foretold the Emperor Napoleon I., his ruin and the plotting of his relatives. Everything came to pass precisely as she had predicted. By special desire of Napoleon I., M'lle LeNormand presented him the cards from which the prophecy has been made, and also her written interpretation and instructions.



Amongst the Imperial Family Treasure this Gift was the most valued and treasured article.

The son of Napoleon III., having become possessed of this relic, could not escape his fate, however, being killed at an early age while battling for the English in the African campaign.

George Korn, native of Alsatia, a sailor and linguist, speaking German, French and English was captured by the Zulu tribe who had become possessed of the interpretations, instructions and cards taken from the body of Napoleon's son. Whilst in captivity, Korn often saw these cards.

Only these Cards and Nothing Else can be thy Savior

were his continual thoughts. Under the impulse of this inspiration he informed the chief of the magical power of these cards, which in possession of an enemy would cause dire disaster to his family as well as himself. Thoroughly frightened the chief gave this treasure to Korn and escorted him to the seacoast far from his place of captivity. After various wanderings and adventures he arrived at the German colony Kameron, where he secured a position on board a Hamburg merchant ship; and through these events we became possessed of the *Genuine Cards*, the handwritten interpretation and instructions how to use them.

M'lle LeNormand destroyed her cards and instructions before her death and had the ashes inclosed in a vessel of lead and which was laid in her tomb according to her last will, so these interpretations written for Napoleon I., and so cleverly saved by Korn were the only and genuine existing. These cards—Oraculum—have been tried in important events and are indeed *"Answers of Destiny."* For the believers it is a sacred treasure and in many instances an article of great value. Unbelievers can pass many tedious hours pleasantly in many ways, particularly in answering delicate questions correctly or otherwise. M'lle LeNormand's instructions in both English and German are complete and plain, and can readily be interpreted by everybody.

Price 50 Cents

Agents can make large sales and earn good profits. Very easy to sell. Enclose amount in postage-stamps and secure sample copy of terms and instructions.

You can order these cards from person delivering this book or we send them well packed, by mail, postage prepaid on receipt of price.

BARCLAY & CO. P. O. Box 847 CINCINNATI, O.

Printed in U. S. A.